

HKCTU process of dissolution

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Hong Kong's largest opposition trade union group set to disband, with leaders beginning process of dissolution

by Chris Law (SCMP)

<https://scmp.com/news/hong-kong/politics/article/3149100/hong-kongs-most-influential-pro-opposition-trade-unions>

Sources say decision to dissolve will be put to a vote at an extraordinary general meeting of the Confederation of Trade Unions in early October

CTU president Joe Wong says an announcement will be made on its future this weekend.

Hong Kong's largest opposition trade union is set to disband, with **leaders of the group beginning the process of dissolution** in the latest case of anti-government activists taking steps to avoid running afoul of the Beijing-imposed national security law.

Sources have told the Post that the decision to dissolve would be put to a vote at an extraordinary general meeting of the Confederation of Trade Unions (CTU) in early October which would be passed if 80 per cent of attendees were in favour of calling it quits.

Joe Wong Nai-yuen, the president of the HKCTU, would neither confirm nor deny it on Friday, saying only that an announcement would be made in two days' time.

The 31-year-old group is among a list of opposition and activist groups targeted by the pro-Beijing media and authorities in the name of national security. Last month, the Wen Wei Po newspaper accused the CTU of pocketing funds from foreign labour unions as well as the National Endowment for Democracy, a US-based organisation funded by Congress that is often identified as an offshoot of the CIA.

The HKCTU's move to disband would add it to a long list of at least 15 opposition groups or unions which have broken up or announced their intention to do so since June.

Responding to Post inquiries, Wong, who took over as the group's leader following the jailing of two other senior figures in recent months, would only say the CTU had met "*late into the night*" on Thursday, and decided to hold a **press conference this weekend**.

The briefing would be held at the group's premises in Yau Ma Tei, Wong said, but a time had not yet been set.

An extraordinary general meeting was expected to be held on October 3.

The CTU was co-founded in 1990 by opposition stalwart Lee Cheuk-yan, who has served as its secretary general since then.

In April, Lee, a former lawmaker, was sentenced to 14 months in prison over an unauthorised assembly and, earlier this month, was charged with inciting subversion under the national security law.

Wong took over as CTU president after Carol Ng Man-yee was charged with subversion earlier this year.

Representing more than 145,000 members, the CTU is one of the two most influential labour groups in Hong Kong. The other is the pro-establishment Federation of Trade Unions (FTU).

One of its most notable achievements was helping dock workers fight for better pay and working conditions at Kwai Tsing Container Terminals during a 40-day strike in 2013.

The group, which has a long history of aligning itself with the city's opposition, has nearly 100 affiliated sector-based unions.

It was vocal during the 2019 anti-government protests, and had encouraged workers to set up trade unions to bolster the opposition movement, often using strikes as part of its tactics.

Pro-establishment lawmaker Wong Kwok-kin of the FTU said the group got caught in the authorities' cross hairs because it often ventured into politics on top of its advocacy of labour rights.

Wong said the group attended many of the protests during the 2019 unrest. Lee was also involved in political activism, he added.

The HKCTU has links with other disbanding groups including the Civil Human Rights Front, the Hong Kong Alliance in Support of Patriotic Democratic Movements of China and Professional Teachers' Union (PTU).

The CTU is a member of the alliance, which organised the city's annual vigil commemorating the 1989 Tiananmen Square crackdown.

The alliance was recently targeted by national security police, with seven leaders charged either with subverting state power, or failing to comply with demands to hand over operational and financial details, an offence set out by the national security law.

The union was also a member of the Civil Human Rights Front, the umbrella group behind many of Hong Kong's biggest protests.

Police had ordered the front to hand over details of its operations and assets under a law governing societies before it announced it was folding in August.

Political scientist Ivan Choy Chi-keung of Chinese University said he believed attacks on the CTU by the pro-Beijing press was part of the central government's wider effort to rein in civic bodies.

One notable feature of the union made it particularly vulnerable, Choy said.

"The most threatening thing is its power to mobilise a large opposition group," he said.

Choy feared the loss of the CTU would mean workers had fewer channels to reflect their grievances as pro-establishment unions were less inclined to challenge the government on certain issues – a point with which Wong of the FTU disagreed.

Meanwhile, the **Hospital Authority Employees Alliance**, an opposition union that arose from the 2019 protests, submitted its response to allegations made earlier this month by the Labour Department's Registry of Trade Unions.

It denied the watchdog's accusation that it was being political.

The registry, among other things, had asked why the group took part in a 2019 strike and about former chairwoman Winnie Yu Wai-ming's role in an unofficial election primary held by the opposition camp last year.

Yu was charged with subversion and detained for months until later granted bail.

The registry also asked why the group commented on the Chinese-made Sinovac Covid-19 vaccine and the government's "Leave Home Safe" app.

Acting chairman David Chan Kwok-shing said the group had followed the law.

"All our commentaries, advocacies and actions were based on statistical, scientific and professional judgments," he added.

Hong Kong Confederation of Trade Unions in process of disbanding, vice-chair confirms

by Rhoda Kwan

<https://hongkongfp.com/2021/09/17/just-in-hong-kong-confederation-of-trade-unions-in-process-of-disbanding-vice-chair-confirms/>

The Confederation of Trade Unions is the latest civil society organisation to crumble in the face of a sweeping clampdown on national security grounds.

Hong Kong's pro-democracy trade union coalition is in the process of disbanding, its vice chairperson has told HKFP, becoming the latest civil society group to fold in the face of an intensified government crackdown.

Leo Tang of the Hong Kong Confederation of Trade Unions on Friday confirmed **the group had begun disbandment procedures**, but said nobody from its leadership has resigned.

Earlier local media reports on Friday had suggested that its chief executive Mung Siu-tat had already stepped down.

The group is still in discussions and expects to make an **official announcement of its reasons for disbanding on Sunday afternoon**, Tang told HKFP.

Pro-Beijing magazine Eastweek reported last month, citing anonymous sources, that the coalition could be the next target for a national security police investigation.

Founded in 1990, the HKCTU championed workers' rights and represented 145,000 members from 93 different groups covering a broad spectrum including aviation, construction, catering, retail and social welfare.

Civil society groups crumbling

It becomes the latest major pro-democracy civil society group to disband in recent months, following the dissolution of one of its former members, the city's largest teachers' union, and of the pro-democracy coalition which organised the city's mass pro-democracy marches.

Dozens of smaller pro-democracy groups have also disbanded since the introduction of the national security law in June 2020.

The disbandment comes amid growing pressure from Chinese-backed media on the city's unions and mounting national security probes on pro-democracy civil society groups.

Pressure on pro-democracy groups which have long been part of the city's social fabric has prompted critics to accuse Hong Kong authorities of using the security law to dismantle civil society. Leader Carrie Lam has denied such an intention.

The HKCTU's founder and general secretary, veteran pro-democracy activist Lee Cheuk-yan, is currently serving concurrent sentences of 18 months for his participation in the 2019 pro-democracy

protests. He also faces a national security charge of *"incitement to subversion."*